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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 06 TEL AVIV 004930

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: IS_KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

11. Iran: Nuclear Program

12. Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Most major media led with disengagement-related developments. Ha'aretz highlighted the collecting of army-issued weapons in Sa-Nur and Homesh, two of the northern West Bank settlements slated for evacuation, and the closing of Ganim and Kadim, the settlements with a similar status, to non-resident Israelis. The media reported that Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz signed an administrative order obliging Miriam and Yaron Adler, who moved to Sa-Nur last year to protest the disengagement, to return to their former residence in Kiryat Arba (next to Hebron). The media reported that, in a rare move, Attorney General Menachem Mazuz decided to deport Sa'adia Herschkopf -- a dual American and Israeli citizen and one of the three activists of the outlawed group Kach put into administrative detention by Mofaz this week -- to the U.S. for 40 days. The deportation will replace his administrative detention.

Jerusalem Post quoted a senior diplomatic official as saying that Israel will retain security responsibility for the northern West Bank. Jerusalem Post reported that Palestinian officials have confirmed to the newspaper that they have been told this by Israel as well. The newspaper quoted a Western diplomatic official as saying that PA Interior Minister Nasser Yousef complained to U.S. envoy Lt.-Gen. William Ward during a meeting Tuesday about Israel's intentions regarding overall security control of the northernmost part of the West Bank after disengagement. Israel Radio filed a similar report. Israel Radio reported that today at the Erez Crossing, Ward and Palestinian Deputy Interior Minister Jamal Abu Zayd will discuss the deployment plan of Palestinian forces in the Gaza Strip.

Yediot reported on the acceleration of departure preparations by Gush Katif residents. Leading media reported that extremist settlers are hoarding food and gas.

Most media (lead stories in Ma'ariv and Hatzofe, as the latter banners: "Binyamin Netanyahu -- on His Way to Premiership") cited polls conducted among registered Likud voters, indicating that Netanyahu would beat Ariel Sharon in a contest for party leadership:
-Channel 10-TV/New Wave poll: Netanyahu: 42.1 percent; Sharon: 27.7 percent; other answers: 30.2 percent.
-Ha'aretz/Dialogue Institute poll: Netanyahu: 35 percent; Sharon: 29.1 percent; Knesset Member Uzi Landau: 17.3 percent; other answers: 18.6 percent.
According to this survey, Netanyahu would prevail over Sharon, 47 to 33 percent, if the two men ran alone.
(Landau announced Tuesday he would run for Likud chairmanship.)

Ha'aretz and Israel Radio reported that Mofaz and PA Civilian Affairs Minister Muhammad Dahlan agreed Tuesday that Israel would start demolishing the settlers' houses in the Gaza Strip, after which the World Bank would hire the services of Palestinian and Egyptian firms to complete the task. Some of the rubble would serve Palestinian construction in the Strip. The media reported that Quartet envoy James Wolfensohn attended the meeting. Ha'aretz reported

that Wolfensohn left for Washington last night to present the plan to senior U.S. administration officials.

Ha'aretz cited a report by Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, according to which the center of operations for Palestinian terror will move to the West Bank after disengagement, and the PA's inability to efficiently control events in its areas will allow Hamas to gain strength. The newspaper says that Shlomo Gazit, a Jaffee Center researcher and a former head of IDF Intelligence, argues in the report that disengagement "will be accomplished and achieve its benefits on condition that Israel withdraw completely to the June 4, 1967 borders."

Leading media reported that President Moshe Katsav will speak to the nation tonight, urging settlers and the government to exercise moderation. This is the first time ever that a president of Israel will thus address the Israeli people.

Ha'aretz reported that PA Chairman [President] Mahmoud Abbas told the Palestinian Legislative Council Tuesday that, "based on information that reached the PA" and on agreements reached with Israel regarding the disengagement, it appears that Israel will allow the PA to build a port in the Gaza Strip, and that the two sides had reached agreement on Gaza crossing points. Ha'aretz also reported that Abbas hinted that the Palestinian legislative elections would take place in January.

Hamodi'a and other media cited a report published Tuesday in the Saudi newspaper Al-Watan, according to which the second stage of the Israel-Hizbullah prisoner swap deal failed, following Hizbullah's inability to provide details about the fate of Israeli MIA Ron Arad.

Maariv quoted official Iranian sources as saying that the missile Shihab-3 is now able to reach targets in a 2,000-km range with one-meter precision.

Israel Radio quoted A-G Mazuz as saying before the Knesset's State Control Committee today that it has not been proven up till now that incitement was the cause of the late PM Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, but that deficient security measures were to blame for it. The radio reported that left-wing politicians expressed outrage at Mazuz's pronouncement and quoted Meretz Knesset Member Ran Cohen as saying that this was a particularly inopportune time to make such a comment.

Leading media reported that two Israeli motorists were moderately wounded in a drive-by shooting Tuesday in the southern Hebron hills. While the army is treating the incident as a terrorist shooting, police have not ruled out the possibility of criminal motivation behind the attack, noting that the Israelis are known to the police.

All media quoted Labor Party Secretary-General Eitan Cabel as saying Tuesday that an internal committee investigating alleged forgeries in the party's membership drive found that nearly half the forms that were checked were illegal.

Yediot and Israel Radio reported that on Tuesday, the cabinet approved the 2006 state budget, 12-8. Environment Minister Shalom Simhon (Labor) voted in favor of the budget, contrary to his party's line.

11. Iran: Nuclear Program:

Summary:

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "The international community must flash a 'stop' sign at Khamenei and Ahmadinejad. The leaders of the West must remember that the perpetrators of the London terror attacks derived their extremist ideology from similar sources, and they must not allow the leaders of radical Islam to have nuclear weapons."

Block Quotes:

"Sanctions on Iran"

Independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (August 10): "Israel cannot remain apathetic to the worrisome developments to its east. The Iranian nuclear program, conducted by a hostile and fanatic

regime, is rightly seen here as a grave security threat. The U.S. intelligence assessment leaked last week to The Washington Post which said Iran is about a decade away from having nuclear weapons should not lull decision makers in Jerusalem.... Israeli experts believe that Iran needs another two to four years -- if it abandons all agreements and restrictions -- in order to obtain the amount of fissionable material needed for a nuclear weapon. At that point, the balance of power in the region will change sharply, to Israel's detriment. The European diplomatic effort to stop Iran's nuclearization, which Israel welcomed, has thus far succeeded in slowing the project.... However, that is no reason to relax. The severity of the threat, the time pressure and Iran's blatant challenge to the international community obligate Europe's leaders to rethink the soft line they have taken thus far toward Tehran.... Sanctions are not a miracle cure, especially given the state of the world's oil markets, which would have trouble giving up a major producer such as Iran. But the international community must flash a 'stop' sign at Khamenei and Ahmadinejad. The leaders of the West must remember that the perpetrators of the London terror attacks derived their extremist ideology from similar sources, and they must not allow the leaders of radical Islam to have nuclear weapons."

12. Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv: "Just like the Hamas terror attacks in February 1996 sent [Netanyahu] to the Prime Minister's Office, more Hamas rampaging could send him back there, in 2006, ten years later, to the same place."

Professor Moshe Kaveh, President of the religiously oriented Bar-Ilan University, wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "So far, the demonstrations against disengagement have been dignified, but when it comes to implementing the decisions of the sovereign state, obedience is necessary."

Block Quotes:

I. "Bibi's Friends"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv (August 10): "Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip will begin next week. Ariel Sharon's disengagement from the Likud began this week. The two polls published on Tuesday ... are no less than a political earthquake. In both of them, Binyamin Netanyahu crushes Sharon among Likud registered voters with a lead of over 14 percent. His resignation from the cabinet on Monday suddenly looks like a calculated, winning move. Up until yesterday morning, Sharon's people were still trying to sell the thesis that Netanyahu, as usual, 'had shot himself in the foot'.... And yet, one must not forget: everything depends on disengagement.... A sweeping victory could renew [Sharon's] chances somehow. Netanyahu still could, as usual, make some unexpected mistake. A relative success, or a reasonable one, will also be to Sharon's advantage. A resounding failure, obviously, will put an end to his career.... He does not have to go for the biggest party in order to form the next government. It is enough for it to be in the center, exactly in the center, for him to have an advantage over his adversaries. And Bibi, what about him? Netanyahu again faces a well-known situation: his political career depends on Hamas. Just like the Hamas terror attacks in February 1996 sent him to the Prime Minister's Office, more Hamas rampaging could send him back there, in 2006, ten years later, to the same place. The next disengagement will already be his."

II. "Stop False Messianism"

Professor Moshe Kaveh, President of the religiously oriented Bar-Ilan University, wrote on page one of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (August 10): "As the date of disengagement approaches, leading rabbis in the religious Zionist movement increasingly 'promise' the settlers in the Gaza Strip and northern Samaria [the northernmost part of the West Bank] that 'disengagement will not take place.' I respect and acknowledge the qualities ... of some of these leading rabbis, but I cannot break free of the worrying feeling

that in these statements, the rabbis have crossed a red line, and are thereby endangering democracy and the rule of law in the State of Israel, as well as the status of religious Zionism, to which I belong.... By statements that delude their followers, these rabbis risk soon being declared false prophets. Jewish history teaches us about the places and the fateful outcomes into which false messiahs and false prophets have led us. No less worrying are the repeated instructions to the uniformed troops to disobey orders. Such calls place the religious Jews in the army in an impossible situation -- a traumatic bind of dual loyalty.... The religious Zionist doctrine utterly rejects disobedience towards the state institutions, the army and the other elements of Israeli sovereignty.... So far, the demonstrations against disengagement have been dignified, but when it comes to implementing the decisions of the sovereign state, obedience is necessary."

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